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SUBJECT: INFIGHTING DISPLEASES PARTY LEADERSHIP

REF: PRAIA 012

11. (U) Summary. Internal party disagreements are affecting all three Cape Verdean political parties. The African Party for the Independence of Cape Verde (PAICV) is divided over who will be presidential candidate in the 2011 elections, while factions are fighting over the party presidencies of both the Movement for Democracy (MpD) and the smaller Cape Verdean Democratic and Independent Union (UCID). Although the national presidential elections are still two years away, party leaders feel that the sooner these internal issues are resolved, the better their parties are likely to fare with voters. End Summary

PAICV PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE YET TO BE CHOSEN

12. (SBU) On February 10, 2009, a group of about 200 PAICV supporters met in Praia to back current Parliamentary President, Aristides Lima, as PAICV candidate for President of the Republic. The movement is reportedly being spearheaded by fellow PAICV personality Felisberto Vieira Neves, the former mayor of Praia and increasingly a rival of Prime Minister Jose Maria Neves for leadership of the party. The meeting consisted of lunch followed by stump speeches by party representatives and high-profile PAICV supporters. Among the participants in the meeting were members of Parliament, the President of the Central Bank, the President of the Food Regulatory Agency, and the daughter of current President of the Republic Pedro Pires. The meeting was closed to press and outsiders, but word quickly leaked, and it seemed clear to many observers that Prime Minister Neves had been completely unaware that the event was taking place.

13. (SBU) Note: The PAICV contains two distinct wings. One, largely rural, southern, and more populist is led by revered statesman and national hero Pedro Pires. Vieira is a Pires protege and was the heir apparent to the PAICV party leadership until his stunning upset loss in the 2008 Praia mayoral race. The other wing of the party is more technocratic, backed by the business and political elite of the northern island of Sao Vicente. Neves, with no clear power base of his own, successfully courted this group in his election to the party presidency and Prime Ministry in 2001 and 2006. End Note.

14. (SBU) While a PAICV candidate for the President of the Republic has not been officially chosen or even agreed upon internally, Neves has clearly been favoring another parliamentarian, David Hopffer Almada (an independent candidate for president in 2001, now a member of PAICV). According to a PAICV parliamentarian, Neves was greatly displeased with what he sees as Vieira's attempt to blindside him, circumvent his authority as party president, weaken Almada, and ultimately force Neves into backing Lima.

15. (U) Instead of outwardly chastising other members of his party, Neves publicly urged the participants of the meeting to switch their focus to the national priorities of the moment, namely the revision of the Constitution and the international financial crisis. Neves said that the party's current internal priorities should be the election of new PAICV officers, including party president and regional party leaders. Alluding to the presence of the Central Bank President and the President of the Food Regulator Agency at the Lima rally, Neves decried

insertion of the Bank of Cape Verde and `regulatory agencies' into `political disputes'.

¶16. (SBU) Neves' candidate David Hopffer Almada reportedly wanted further investigation into whether the organizers of the Lima event were breaking party ethics rule by internally allying to promote candidates. However, another PAICV parliamentarian told PolOff that Almada was persuaded that this issue would best be resolved through closed doors discussions involving only the party.

MPD LEADER JORGE SANTOS ALSO FACES CRITICISM

¶17. (SBU) The PAICV is not the only political party dealing with internal struggles. The main opposition party, MpD, has identified a presidential candidate in former Prime Minister and de facto MPD leader Carlos Veiga, but can't reach consensus in its pick for party president. Party members are criticizing current party president Jorge Santos for agreeing to work with Prime Minister Neves on PAICV proposals to reform the justice sector (reftel). They are unhappy that by working in concert with PAICV to solve a judicial crisis, Santos may have helped the PAICV government more than he helped MpD. The MpD is focused on winning the 2011 elections. Under increasing pressure, Jorge Santos has publicly admitted that he is considering resigning as party president. In informal conversations, Post has also heard that MPD leadership has approached other rising stars within the party to gauge their interest in challenging Santos in the next internal party elections.

UCID'S PRESIDENTS FIGHTING FOR LEGITIMACY

¶18. (SBU) Though small and concentrated only on the islands of Santiago, Sao Vicente and Santo Antao, UCID has not been immune to internal party turmoil. While the bulk of UCID support has always been on the island of Sao Vicente, members in Santiago have recently been asserting pressure for Praia to become the official seat of the party. The internal dispute erupted into a full public battle for control of the party when both islands held elections for party president and refused to recognize the other island's choice. This fight eventually went to the Supreme Court of Justice, which analyzed the party's regulations and ruled in favor of the faction based on the island of Sao Vicente, which had protested that the Santiago faction's `election' was not valid under the existing party statutes. Despite this setback, a significant number of Santiago UCID members are still challenging Sao Vicente leadership.

¶19. (SBU) Comment. Internal party democracy is alive and well in Cape Verdean politics, although perhaps to the dismay of current party leaders. It has long been known that Prime Minister Neves had a preferred presidential candidate, but his failure to discuss this matter earlier has led to dissension in the ranks. Neves may have expected that his backing of Almada would have confirmed his candidacy, but that is certainly no longer the case. Almada may be more charismatic, and arguably more attractive to voters, but Lima has some powerful and shrewd support within the party. While national elections are still two years away, PAICV looks disorganized and divided, and some damage control might be needed to restore public faith in the party.

¶10. (SBU) This situation for PAICV would be more serious if not for equally divisive internal issues within MpD and UCID. No party shows a totally united front, and the way in which each party solves its internal issues could go a long way in influencing voters. MpD is acutely aware of this, as internal party divisions are blamed for their defeat in the 2001 elections. Post will continue to track the factious but otherwise healthy jockeying for position within each of the parties in the run-up to the 2011 national elections. End Comment